1: Ammar E, I-5 (1951) 1954
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with food consumption. There is no wife in the village who does not pursue this type of activity, as it is great disgrace not to be able to let blood flow even from a chicken if a guest comes to visit her husband, or at least provide her husband or children with a 'meat dish' on festival occasions. She should also raise goats and sheep, so that in case of death in the house an 'agira'—slain animal—can be always available at the funeral.

Between husband and wife no levity of behaviour is permissible, and no obvious physical intimacy of any sort in public or in front of the children. In fact, the husband's contacts with the house are very few. It is quite common to find a child who has been asked by his mother to call father from a meeting outside saying, 'O father, they say come and speak'. This is usually a call indicating that food is ready but neither the word food nor the word mother are ever supposed to be uttered in public. The father normally quits the house immediately he finishes his meal.

During the first year of marriage the wife does not eat with her husband, partly because he is in the matrilocal residence, and partly because the wife has not yet become the mother of the children. Only then can she eat with him, but she should never confess that she has eaten before he has, for her eating afterwards is the proper procedure.

From the standpoint of sentiment, the in-law relationship is a strong and binding force, involving exchange of gifts, food and visits similar in many ways to the kinship (lineage) obligations. It is said that the wife's mother is normally very affectionate, and always fussing over her son-in-law, especially when he is in his matrilocal residence, and this attitude is usually a source of complaint and jealousy on the part of the brothers and sisters of the bride. Yet the husband's mother is traditionally harsh, difficult and fault-finding. My informant, Ali, explains the difference of the sentiment of the two mothers-in-law by saying: 'The wife's mother is all too glad to procure a husband for her daughter, and she is grateful to him for marrying her daughter; thus she favours him. The husband's mother is resentful of the fact that her son's attachment, which was solely hers before marriage, is shared with his wife.'

It is also significant that the wife never refers to, or addresses her husband by his first name, especially in public. She either refers to him as 'Son of so and so' (his father), or 'my man', or less commonly 'my husband'. She addresses him by saying 'O man'; and the same applies to her husband who refers to his wife as 'my woman' or 'people of the house' and addresses her by saying 'O girl'.[1]

[1] Concerning the absence of any demonstration of tender feeling between wife and husband, Westermarck writes, 'It is considered indecent of a man to show any affection for his wife, and it would consequently be improper to speak of it in proverbs'. He further maintains that such an absence does not mean that no such feeling exists but has to be understood in relation to the Moorish ideas of decency. *Wit and Wisdom in Morocco*, London, 1930, p. 32.

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THE SOCIAL ORGANIZATION OF THE COMMUNITY

I have a thousand people besides my paternal and maternal uncles.'
When the patient's mother heard the conversation, she offered the doctor her necklace and bracelets.
When the father heard about this, he offered his land and property.
When the sister heard about this, she offered her anklets and earrings.
When his people (i.e. joint family) heard about this, they said 'We shall all pay it with no fuss or difficulty'.

This support shows itself not only when the relatives and friends go to visit the sick person in the village, irrespective as to whether the disease is infectious or not, but also when they visit him in hospital in town. If the person recovers from a serious illness, or comes back home after being away for some time, the people go to congratulate him for his recovery or for his return home by saying 'Let us thank God for your safety'.

To take another example, if a cow or a camel has been seriously injured in an accident, it is killed, and the owner's relatives, neighbours, and friends are morally compelled to buy a portion of the meat to part-compensate for the loss. If a person's animal dies he is consoled by others with the invocation 'May God compensate you'.

Death is another major event in which the family finds itself supported by condolences and sympathies of kinsfolk. If the deceased belongs to the category of youngsters, condolence is compulsory on the clan and intimate friends only. If he belongs to the second and third categories of age groups (unmarried or adults) the whole village has to condole with the sufferers. In death, more than in any other event, kinship ties are the most important factor in deciding one's social obligations. It is incumbent on the close relatives both paternal and maternal, as well as in-laws, to stay away from work and remain in the guest house for ten or fifteen days, and frequently sleep there, or in the case of women, in the house of the deceased relative. Close relatives have to assist in conveying the funeral bier to the cemetery, to mourn the deceased more than others, and to send food to the guest house and to the house of the deceased, normally an obligation more upon the clan house-heads and the close maternal relatives than upon any others.

The same solidarities and mutual family and clan obligations manifest themselves on occasions of rejoicing such as birth, circumcision and weddings, by sending gifts, food, by helping in the preparation of the ceremony, or at least by merely attending in the case of men or sending out a joy-cry in the case of women.

Moreover, the social structure functions also as a means of mediation in the sectional frictions that are bound to arise. In the following example, which the writer witnessed, the head members of a clan mediated between

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FOLK LIFE AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN THE VILLAGE

Notions connected with life and death are, on the whole, mixed up with religion. To die on holy days, such as Fridays or in the month of Ramadan, is a sign of God's blessing.

Sanctity shows itself also in status and rank and their role in the community. According to the villagers, the 'ashraf' (people of distinguished descent being related to the Prophet) have a better chance of salvation than others, a notion which, of course, satisfies the villagers' ego as they consider themselves descendants of the Prophet. The persistence of the religious prerogatives of the 'ashraf' goes to show that the central conception of Islam in the equality of all believers has not entirely supplanted the Arab reverence for distinguished genealogy.

The villagers' attitude of respect for religious men is based on two principles. The first is that of knowledge of Koranic studies, combined with observation of religious duties; the second is derived from hereditary piety, as recognized piety is believed to be handed from father to son. The example of the two pious men acknowledged and venerated as such by the villagers is perhaps the best illustration. One of these two pious sheikhs is the son of the villagers' deceased saint around whose shrine the tombs of the villagers' cemetery is spread. As this sheikh does not live in the village, he frequently comes to it either for an ordinary visit, for taking part in settling serious disputes between individuals or families, or to collect his annual custom of crops offered to him by the villagers during harvest time. During his stay he moves from one guest house to another as the guest of a clan or a family which endeavours to provide hospitality for him and thus win his approval. In return, the sheikh is requested to write charms, or to bless water, or to read over a sick person, and thus secure his 'baraka'.[1]

The piety of the other religious man is based also on the fact that he is the grandson of a man who was one of the favourite disciples of the chief founder of the Nakshbadia mystic sect. His grandfather is reputed to have done miraculous deeds and had composed mystic verses usually recited amongst the members of the sect. His piety is also based on the grounds that he studied at al-Azhar Mosque and thus he is considered to be well versed in Koranic studies. It was because of his piety that he gained most of the votes in Silwa, when he stood as a candidate for the Parliament as mentioned earlier.

It is also recognized that people who know the sacred book by heart should be venerated as the carriers of knowledge, and many people regard them as possessed of 'baraka'. In Arab councils, religious men are always included, and their decisions are usually respected.

Moreover, the main events of life and death have their religious significance or at least their sanction. It is in the Prophet's tradition to celebrate the naming ceremony, to circumcise children, and to get them married.

[1] This sheikh died during my field work and a delegation from the village went to his village in condolence.

1: Ammar E. I-5 (1951) 1954
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customs like the people in Silwa. The visiting priest who comes yearly to the village is certainly welcome on his arrival, and people flock to him for advice on religious matters. On attending one of these meetings, the writer was struck by the number of questions that those present put to him concerning the details of prayers, e.g. whether one lifts his hand up to his shoulder or up to his ears, how one sits on after prostration, what one might say before and after prayers. Other questions that arose were queries about whether certain sayings or deeds were considered to be religiously approved or disapproved, how and to whom one would make a sacrifice oath, whether visiting saints' tombs is a good thing or not, and so forth.

Village life, on the whole, whether in religious or social spheres, is very ritually and ceremonially conscious, and almost invulnerable on this level. Greeting, hospitality, eating, praying, exchange of social obligations, circumcision, marriage, and dozens of items of life are shrouded with ritual and traditional prescriptions. My informant, Mahmoud, told me that after a sermon given by a preacher coming from the city, who told the villagers that their customs practised on the death of a person were non-Islamic, they took a vow not to practise them any more. Yet the adherence to the oath was made for some six months, after which people gradually relapsed to their traditional ways, with the only exception that women were allowed to follow the deceased as far as the southern end of the village instead of going on to the cemetery as had been the practice hitherto.

The extent of social change on the folkhood of the village could be also examined in the villagers' ideas about sickness and disease which are mixed with ritual and religious beliefs. Disease, it is supposed, can be caused either by failure to fulfil some religious ritual or ceremony, such as a financially able man not performing his pilgrimage, or the failure to give the promised offerings to a saint, or providing a naming ceremony for a new-born baby. If saints are suspected as the cause of the disease, usually a woman known to be the guardian of that particular saint, or upon whom saints descend, would be consulted to tell whether the family has broken or forgotten a sacrificial custom. If no special saint has been offended, then bread could be specially baked and distributed as a 'karama' amongst people after the Friday prayer, asking God to relieve the sick.

Sickness can also be caused by the evil eye, and in such cases a learned man is asked to recite verses from the Koran or write a charm (higab) to be worn by the sick person as a prophylactic safeguard as well as a means of treatment. Certain diseases like paralysis are believed to be caused by the evil red wind emanating from the touch of jinn; an epileptic is also a person who is mounted and obsessed by jinn who usually haunt deserted places, wells, and high spots in the mountains. Curiously enough, tuberculosis is believed to be caused by pretence and social conceit.

Moreover, a sickness is considered as God's test for the endurance and patience of the faithful. As the faithful are always exposed to affliction, their faith in God should never be shaken, and hence their endurance of

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THE MAIN CHARACTERISTICS AND EVENTS OF CHILDHOOD

The alignment of the child with its sex could be also inferred from the fact that during the ceremony the boy wears a girl's headcloth, symbolizing his last chance of indulging in any activity which is not deemed fit for males.[1] This influence has been brought to the writer's mind by the barber's comment; while wrapping the headcloth round the boy's neck, he says: 'Let us put this female cloth around you, and by making you look like a girl tonight, you will be able to avert the evil eye.' This is also obvious in the expected behaviour of the boys not to cry or show any signs of pain during the operation, in order to whiten the father's face, while the girls in contrast are expected and allowed to cry. That the difference in the expectation is due to the fact that the girl's operation is more painful than that of the boy, and hence justifiable, is one way of looking at it, but it is undoubtedly a reflection of the expected ethos of the two sexes.[2] Endurance of pain is a heroic action of the male, while crying and weeping is only expected from women. The difference of 'ethos' between the two sexes reflects itself also in their public attitudes towards a person's death. While the men solemnly gather in the guest house for the obsequies, and public demonstration of weeping is only expected from them on their return journey to the guest house after the burial, the women express their grief in almost hysterical weeping, wailing and dirging.

During the circumcision ceremony the boy's aggression is however allowed to express itself during the procession that follows the operation, as while he is carried on his way to the mosque and the Nile, he is allowed to break an egg by throwing it at any person in the procession. On the other hand, the girl is given free scope in crying, screaming and asking for help.

One cannot fail to see the connection between circumcision and marriage, the former being a preparation for the latter, and the similarities between the public celebration of the two events are striking, as will be shown later in discussing the marriage ceremony. A circumcised boy or girl is normally referred to as 'bridegroom' or 'bride' in anticipation of their future role in life. The connection between circumcision and marriage is also obvious from beliefs and rituals common to both events; the circumcised boy as well as the bridegroom must visit the mosque or gaze on the Nile. The belief is that on his or her circumcision or wedding, a person could be deprived of fertility and potency, and hence great care must be taken to avoid the evil eye, and to avoid those who are sterile and desire fertility, who may well seize the opportunity to use or cross over the circumcised or married man's instruments and clothes. The connection between circumcision and fertility could be also inferred from the

[1] Edward Lane mentions that during his time boys used to be dressed in girls' garments in the circumcision ceremony. *Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians*, p. 59.

[2] The word 'ethos' here is used in the sense in which Bateson has defined it as 'the culturally standardized system of organization of the instincts and the emotions of individuals'. Naven, p. 220.

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
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there are three or four such buildings. Five times a day a *mueddin* chants the call to prayer from each mosque—from the minaret if there is one—and the resonant voices of these officiants may be heard far beyond the confines of the village.

An old graveyard often stands in the middle of a village, probably indicating the older boundary, the houses built beyond it having been erected later owing to the increasing population (see below, p. 72 and Fig. 32). A whitewashed building, crowned with

FIG. 10. WARP-THREADS ATTACHED TO PALM-TREES

a dome, stands, perhaps, on the highest point of the burial-ground, indicating the last resting-place of a sheikh, or holy man, or, at any rate, erected in his honour. Candles are usually lighted in the building on "the night of Friday"—*i.e.*, the night preceding the Friday—in commemoration of the sheikh. Such lights are, in most cases, the only illumination out of doors to guide the late wayfarer. These buildings, and there are often several in or around one village, are prominent architectural features, standing up with their whitewashed walls and domes above, and in glaring contrast to, the mud houses and hovels of the peasants.

Shops of different kinds are situated in the wider streets or lanes,

PERSONAL DECORATION AND ORNAMENTS

again appear, and the mourning kerchief is replaced by one of brighter hue. Should a woman do this before her second husband is secured the whole village knows that she is anxious to marry again.

Women, especially when the hair begins to turn grey, often dye it with *henna*, which stains it a bright red. This may be done by a woman who, wishing to obtain another husband, endeavours to obliterate the signs of advancing years. One day when visiting a village where I have often stayed for many weeks at a time I saw an old crone performing her toilet on the roof of her house. She was combing out her very scanty locks, which were dyed a bright red. Unfortunately, she had not been altogether successful with her hair-tinting, for considerable patches of white hair were still plainly visible. I asked a woman friend of mine, in whose house I was sitting, if the old woman wanted to marry again. She laughed, and said that she believed that this was so! I never heard that she met with any sort of success in that direction!

The men either have their hair cut quite short, or else they have the head shaved altogether. Some of them, however, leave one lock of hair at the back of the head, allowing it to grow quite long, even though the rest of the head may be closely shaved. One man told me that he wore this lock of hair so that when he died the men who washed him might not have to touch his head, but could hold it by this lock. I gathered that he thought that it would defile him if they caught hold of his head, but I am not sure about this point. My brother, Dr A. M. Blackman, tells me that a man told him that the object of the lock was to prevent those who washed a corpse from raising the head by putting a hand into the mouth and so possibly defiling the dead.

The men usually shave all the hair off the face, except the moustache. Old men, however, frequently allow the beard to grow, as it is looked upon as a mark of honour at that time of life. Most of the body hair of both sexes is shaved off, to ensure ceremonial purity.

A child often has the hair shaved off just above the forehead. In some parts of Egypt this is considered to be a good thing for the eyes, as it is believed that the hair growing on that part of the head is injurious to the eyesight when the child is very young. The shaven portion is often covered with *henna*. Another special

BIRTH AND CHILDHOOD

A child under eight years of age may suddenly begin to shake all over, gasping, and catching at its throat, as if it could not breathe. When this happens the grandmother, or, if there is no grandmother, a neighbour, is called in, and she takes the child, or, if there is more than one child under eight years of age, each one in turn, on to her lap and folds her *gallabīyeh* (native dress) over it. Then she takes a spindle and the implement (*maḥalleh*) on to which the wool is wound after it is spun, and winds the wool on to it ; if there is no wool she will simulate the action of winding.

FIG. 32. RUINED GRAVES, IN THE APERTURES OF WHICH CHILDREN ARE PLACED WHEN AFFECTED BY THE MOTHER'S ḲARĪNEH

Then she will break both the spindle and the *maḥalleh*, and the child will recover.

A woman's *ḳarīneh* may sometimes perform a kindly action, for a certain woman who is related to a man whom I know always declares that her *ḳarīneh* is very good to her. This woman has ten boys and two girls, and she is a widow and very poor. Her *ḳarīneh*, so she says, often comes to her when she is short of money and cannot do anything to help herself or her children. On one occasion when she was in this plight she heard her *ḳarīneh* call her by name three times while she was sleeping at night. Her *ḳarīneh* then took her by the hand and led her down the street in which she lived. When she got to the end of it the *ḳarīneh* put some money in her hand and left her. The woman then returned to her house.

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782 a blessing, or to urge some special petition, such as the gift of children. He states that the suppliants believe that a more favourable reception to their prayers will be granted if offered up in such sacred places.

842 718 123 *Barakeh* is also occasionally believed to be possessed by, or attached to, living people. Over and over again women have come up to touch me because they believed I had this virtue. Among the numbers of women who in 1926 came to me to step over the blue glazed charms which I always take about with me was a young married woman who was in a state almost verging on madness because she had no children. Five years ago she had given birth to a child which survived only a few hours. Since then she had had no hope of becoming a mother. She was in a desperate plight, and her fears were increased because she suspected that her husband would shortly divorce her as there seemed to be no prospect of a family. She begged and entreated me to help her, so I suggested the charms, over which she stepped seven times. She came a second and a third time, becoming more and more frantic as time went on.

The last time she visited me she said, "O gracious lady, I know you *can* help me if you will; we all know you have so much *barakeh*!" She then seized my hand, pressing it against her, and saying, "You *can* give me *barakeh* if you will!"

I expressed my sorrow for and sympathy with her, and she took her departure. Not long after I heard from one of her fellow-villagers that her wish was at last realized, and that she had hopes of becoming a mother. It was all put down to me, and she called it *my* child! Many people after this came to me from her village for the same purpose, and all, so I heard, met with the same success. The population of that village should be appreciably increased through my supposed *barakeh*!

842 764 It is a popular belief in Egypt that if a dead child is tightly bound in its shroud the mother cannot conceive again. Therefore the shroud and the cords binding it are always loosened just before burial, dust also being put in the child's lap. The dust is put there, so I was told, in order to keep the body lying on its back. The woman who gave me this information said that sometimes a body twists round when decomposition sets in, and if this happens the mother cannot have another child. If, in spite of precautions, the woman as time goes on seems to have no prospect of again becoming

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to the railway and make her lie down between the lines in order that the train may pass over her. One reason given me for this somewhat dangerous procedure is that the fear which the woman experiences assists conception, for it is said to cause the blood to circulate quickly through the body, making the womb expand, with the result that she will more easily conceive. Another ex-

FIG. 45. FERTILITY RITE: LIGHTING THE 'CANDLE'

planation given me for this rite was that when the mother is thus frightened her *ḳarīneh* comes to her with the soul of one of her dead children and causes it to re-enter its mother's body. The soul of a dead child, so I have been told, goes to its mother's *ḳarīneh*. Probably these explanations are accepted by some of the people, but in many cases, I fancy, such rites are merely carried out because they are customary and recognized cures for childlessness.

The water with which a corpse is washed before burial is, if possible, obtained from a mosque or from a sheikh's sacred well. After the washing is completed a barren woman will seize the opportunity to step over this water seven times. I was told of one who resorted to this device and who became pregnant a month afterward.

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CHAPTER VII

DEATH AND FUNERARY CEREMONIES

WHEN a male or female Muslim is dying it is the custom to give him or her some water to drink. So far, despite careful inquiries, I have discovered no definite belief associated with the practice; all that I have been told is that it is a custom that must always be observed. It may originally, perhaps, have been a purificatory or vivificatory rite. In certain parts of Egypt it is the custom for some of the people sitting or standing near a person who is *in extremis* to squeeze his or her body with their hands, in order to force the soul out of it. Men do this for a man and women for a woman. When death has actually taken place the eyes and mouth of the deceased are closed, and the legs drawn down straight and laid close together. The body is then washed, the water for this purpose being obtained, if possible, from a mosque or from some sacred well or pool connected with a sheikh. In Upper Egypt the corpse may be washed by a *fikīh*, who takes as payment all the clothes of the deceased, and also the remains of the soap used in the washing.

As Egypt is a very hot country burial takes place very shortly after death. For instance, if a death has occurred in the morning or early afternoon the funeral takes place the same day. On the other hand, if death resulted from some injury due to accident or an act of violence burial is not permitted till the Government doctor and police officials have made full investigations.

If some one is dying in the village the news soon spreads, and friends and relations flock in crowds to the house. The moment the breath is out of the body female relatives and a number of professional mourners begin to shriek and scream (Fig. 50). Many of them leave the house of death and perambulate the village seven times, uttering the while piercing cries, and waving handkerchiefs, usually black, blue, or green in colour, as they go along. This perambulation of wailing women is not, anyhow at the present day, consciously associated with any idea of driving the spirit or

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ghost of the deceased away from the village. I am told that it is merely the way of making it known that a death has taken place.

When the corpse has been washed it is wrapped in cotton or silk cloths, the first wrapping being usually white, the outer green. Green is the sacred colour among Muslims, being associated with the Prophet Muḥammed. His descendants, or perhaps I should say those who lay claim to be such, very often wear a green turban.

FIG. 50. WOMEN WAILING OUTSIDE AN ENGINE-HOUSE, WHERE A BOY HAD JUST BEEN KILLED

Note the uplifted arms of the dead boy's mother, in the centre, a characteristic attitude of grief. See below, p. 236, and Fig. 137.

The Muslims do not bury in coffins. The corpse, when wrapped, is laid on a bier with low sides, and this is covered with a shawl by way of a pall. The sex of the deceased is indicated by slight differences in the draping of the shawl.

When a man or a woman dies a ram must be killed and some of its blood sprinkled on the place where the death occurred. If this is not done the *rōḥ* (soul) will remain in the house and cannot go to heaven. If the people are too poor to afford a ram a kid is killed instead. When the father of a rich man whom I know died a ram and some other animals were killed at the house, and, in addition, a camel was slaughtered near his grave and the meat distributed among the poor

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DEATH AND FUNERARY CEREMONIES

The clothes which the man or woman wore when he or she died must be washed, and then a *fiḳīh* comes and recites passages from the Ḳorān, having the clothes close to him and one of his hands resting on them. He also recites over the place where the person died. If these precautions are not taken the *rōḥ* of the dead person cannot leave the house. When a child dies a hen is killed instead of an animal, the rest of the procedure being the same as on the occasion of the death of an older person.

I have given this information as it was repeated to me, but I

FIG. 51. STRING OF WAILING WOMEN IN A FUNERAL PROCESSION

fancy that it is really the *ʿafrīt* of the dead person that is meant in this statement, not the *rōḥ*, which is the soul, the *ʿafrīt* being the ghost, and quite separate from the *rōḥ*, according to the popular belief.[1]

The corpse is borne to the grave by four male bearers, who are constantly changed during the procession to the cemetery, for to assist in thus carrying the dead is considered a pious act, and he who performs it thereby acquires considerable merit. The funeral procession is headed by men, those who are relations walking as near as possible to the bier. Immediately behind the bier walk the female mourners (Fig. 51), their faces, hands, and arms dyed blue, and their heads, breasts, and arms plastered with mud; they hold handkerchiefs, usually blue or black, and sometimes green, which they wave in the air as they give vent to their piercing

[1] See below, pp. 237 ff.

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ululations of grief. Among them are professional wailers, whose lamentations are the loudest of all.

It should be noted here that the wailing and general uproar made by women at a death is quite contrary to the teaching of the founder of Islām, and many men among the peasants in Egypt have often expressed to me their disapproval of the practice. As will be seen later, this custom is one of the many survivals from ancient times

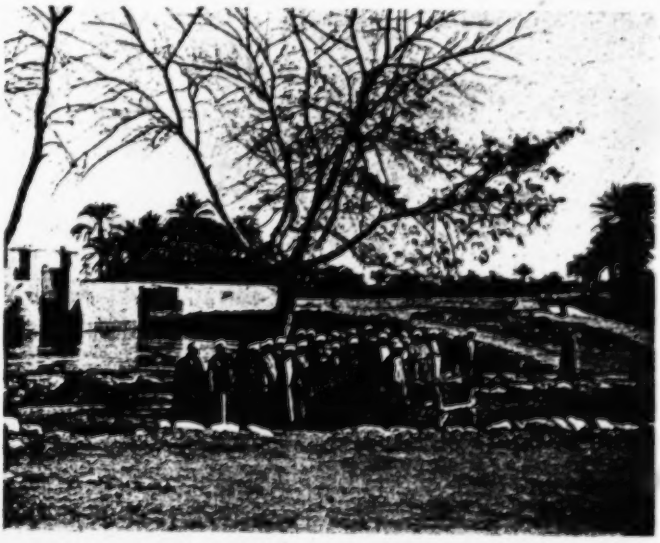

FIG. 52. THE HALT FOR PRAYER ON THE WAY TO THE CEMETERY

It is surprising for how long a time the women can keep up their wailing, which is pitched in a very high key. As a matter of fact, their throats are often so affected by the continuous uttering of these piercing cries that at the end of one day of mourning they can speak only in a whisper.

On its way to the grave the funeral procession halts at a specially chosen spot, and the bier is placed on the ground (Fig. 52). The men stand in rows, one behind the other, and assume a deeply reverential attitude, while a *fiḳīh* (plur. *fuḳahā*; see p. 172) recites passages from the Ḳorān, the assembled men often joining in. When these recitations are finished the bearers come forward and raise

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the bier from the ground, and the procession is continued to the grave. As they proceed the men chant the profession of faith: "There is no God but God, and Muḥammed is the Apostle of God. The blessing of God upon him and peace, a thousand blessings upon Muḥammed." These words are repeated over and over again till the graveside is reached.

It is believed that the dead, while being carried to the grave, can make their bearers walk fast or slowly. If the bearers are made to go quickly it is said to mean that the deceased is a good man or woman, who wishes to go as fast as possible to the tomb, and does not fear the visit of the two angels Nākir and Nekīr, who are believed to come to the tomb on the first night after burial to examine the deceased as to the life he spent on earth and to question him as to his religion.

When the bearers suddenly feel themselves being dragged back, or even unable to move at all, it is believed to be that the deceased does not like the spot chosen for the grave.

During a funeral procession in a village well known to me the bearers were not able to advance a step, owing to the dead man objecting to the locality of his grave; however, as it had already been dug, and the bearers were not willing to pander to any such whim, they carried the bier round and round in a circle, thus making the dead man so giddy that he lost his power over his bearers and did not realize where they were conveying him! They were thus able to rush him into his grave without more ado!

On another occasion, in the road running past my house, I saw the bearers being dragged back by constant jerks. The reason given was that the dead woman who was being carried to her grave was upset that her son, a very young boy, was not in the procession. Some one, therefore, had to fetch him, and then the *cortège* proceeded on its way without further interruption.

There appears to be a belief, at any rate among some of the peasants, that a man's shadow is a separate entity. It walks with him through life, dies with him at his death, and then enters with him into his tomb. When discussing this point with some of the people I gathered that no one knew what became of it afterward. I was told that there is no belief, such as is found in some parts of the world, that a man may be injured by some one stepping on his shadow.

On returning to the house of the deceased the men seat them-

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selves outside the doorway, where they are joined by friends, all observing almost complete silence, except on arrival, when they may say, "*El-bakīyeh fi ḥayātak*"—literally, "May what remains over be in your life!"—*i.e.*, "May the rest of the days of the dead be added to your life!"

The female mourners, including the professional wailers, congregate together, either inside the house or in some secluded spot outside. Here they continue to utter their piercing cries, and usually also engage in a dance. The dancers, each one swaying slightly backward and forward, move in a circle, smiting their cheeks the while with both hands in rhythmic accompaniment to their chanting and cries. I have seen women thus beating their cheeks till blood flowed. One of the dancers often beats a *nadam*, a single-membrane drum, resembling a tambourine, but without jingles.

The mourning ceremonies are continued for seven days, though very occasionally they may last for three days only. The first evening after the burial *fuḳahā* come to the house, one of them bringing a large rosary, called a *sibḥeh*, consisting of five hundred to a thousand large beads. They repeat passages from the Ḳorān a thousand times, keeping count of the recitations by means of the beads. The merit of this religious exercise is conveyed to the deceased. During the period of mourning *fuḳahā* come daily to the house to recite the Ḳorān, but the ceremony with the rosary is performed on the first night only.

The *fuḳahā* are usually given a small sum of money for their services, and also at intervals in their recitations they are refreshed with coffee and cigarettes, but no one, either performer or listener, would ever think of smoking while they are in progress. I have been present several times on such occasions, and have been much impressed by the excellence of many of the voices, as well as by the reverent attitude of all the people present. The *fuḳahā* sit cross-legged on a bench inside the house, and, as they recite, sway from side to side, holding one hand against one side of the face. One of them usually acts as leader, and the others join in as a chorus; or sometimes the chief *fiḳīh* will tell one of his subordinates to take his place and recite. The recitations last for an hour or more.

On the seventh day after a death the mourning at the house ceases, and the women, accompanied by their male relatives, visit the grave. They bring loaves of bread, called *kaḥk*, which are

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
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either round and somewhat flat or ring-shaped. A number of very poor people and *fuḳahā* follow the mourners to the cemetery. The bread is given away to the poor in the name of the dead, and the *fuḳahā* also receive their share in return for recitations from the Ḳorān at the graveside. These men may receive small sums of money for their services in addition to the gifts of bread. The visit is repeated on the fifteenth and fortieth days after the death (see also pp. 117 ff.)

It is customary to engage two or three *fuḳahā* to give recitations regularly two or three times a year in a house where a death has taken place, to ensure the welfare of the deceased. Some people arrange for even more frequent recitations.

I will now briefly describe the various kinds of graves I have seen. The structure varies according to the nature of the ground in which the cemetery is situated. In some parts of Egypt the dead are buried along the lower desert. In this case the grave is not usually prepared beforehand, but a number of men, carrying the necessary implements for digging, accompany the funeral procession. When they arrive at the selected spot the bier on which the body lies is placed on the ground, and a shawl is fixed on sticks stuck into the ground to act as a temporary wind-screen. The diggers then set to work, and, after removing the covering of sand, dig a rectangular pit in the underlying limestone rock, oriented east and west. On the south side of the pit[1] a recess is cut, large enough to admit the corpse, which is lifted into its last resting-place by some of the men present, and with its head toward the west—*i.e.*, looking east toward Mecca. The recess is then bricked over in such a way that a chamber is formed of sufficient size to admit of the deceased sitting up in it. This is necessary on account of the belief that when the two examining angels visit the grave on the first night after burial the dead must be able to sit up while they question him. For this reason also the cords or tapes which are bound round the wrappings of the dead must be unfastened as soon as the body is laid in the grave. When the recess has been bricked over the pit is filled up and the sand piled in a mound over it, palm-branches being stuck into the sand to surmount the whole.

Sometimes instead of the mound of sand a brick superstructure such as is described below is erected above the grave. The above-

[1] So in the case of two interments that I have witnessed.

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
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mentioned palm-branches, which are often carried in the funeral processions, are placed over the graves (see Fig. 53) because they are believed to bring a blessing to the dead. For the same reason plants of *ṣabr* (aloes) are often planted, either in earthenware pots or in the ground itself, close to the mound.

Sometimes these rock-hewn burial-places are of a more elaborate design. Instead of the pit giving direct access to the burial-chamber there may be an intervening passage, the outer end of which, not the immediate entrance to the chamber, is bricked up before the pit is filled with sand and the excavated *débris*.

If the cemetery does not lie in the lower desert, but in, or on the edge of, the cultivation, the graves are somewhat differently constructed. A large chamber is excavated underground and surmounted by a flat-topped or vaulted superstructure, which varies considerably according to the taste or wealth of the owner of the tomb. The chamber constitutes a family vault, and most of the members of one family are buried in it, the sexes being usually divided, the men lying together apart from the women. This is the general rule, but I have been told that it is not always strictly adhered to by the *fellāḥīn*. Above the ground, at one end of the superstructure, is a recess, which indicates where the opening to the grave is situated underground. Palm-branches are placed in front of this recess, and plants of *ṣabr* are often planted on either side of it. At this spot, too, the relatives and friends assemble and sit down during the periodical visits to the graves discussed on pp. 117 ff. and 263 ff.

That the dead should appear to their relations and fellow-villagers soon after death is looked upon as a matter of course and an event of common occurrence. I have heard of many such appearances, which are much welcomed by, and are a great comfort to, the mourners. The following account of an after-death appearance which led to the detection of crime was given me by an old friend, who swore that it was quite true.

Two years before the story was told to me a man in one of the provinces in Middle Egypt married a woman of questionable character. After the marriage he found out that she was unfaithful to him, so one day, accompanied by a friend, he took her out for a walk. She wanted to go one way, but they insisted on her going the way they chose. They went on till they arrived at a newly dug well, into which they threw her and then filled up the

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
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pit. Shortly after this she appeared first to her brother, then to her mother, and then again to her brother, to whom she related the circumstances of her death and the exact spot where they would find the filled-in well at the bottom of which her body lay. The brother reported this to the proper officials, who went to the spot, had the well excavated, and found the woman's body at the bottom, just as she had told her mother and brother. The husband and the friend who had assisted him in the murder were convicted on this evidence, and sentenced to fifteen years' imprisonment.

One day a week—in some parts of Egypt on Thursday, in others on Friday—the villagers pay a visit to the graves of their relations and friends. The ceremony is called *eṭ-Ṭala'*, meaning the coming forth or the going up. Many of the cemeteries are situated in the lower desert, and this name may have been given because the people always speak of 'going up' to and 'descending' from the desert. On the day of *eṭ-Ṭala'* the souls of the dead are believed to return to their graves, and they expect their relatives to meet them there. I have often taken part in these ceremonies, and the following description of one of my visits shows what the proceedings are on such occasions.

The cemetery where the events described took place is situated in the lower desert, and it runs parallel to an ancient burial site lying rather nearer the upper-desert slope. It is a sand- and wind-swept place, and the palm-branches stuck into the mounds above the graves quickly wither and assume the pale tawny colour of the surrounding desert. But from the high-desert slope above, where I was camping with my brother, the shadows cast by these branches are so dark that they give the impression of black-clad figures kneeling in perpetual grief, keeping silent watch by each grave. From the camp I could see the people on their way to visit the graves, and also much that was going on in the cemetery itself. Early in the morning processions of women, often accompanied by their male relatives, were to be seen wending their way from the neighbouring villages toward this desert graveyard. Some were walking, some, mostly men, were riding on donkeys. As soon as the sound of the still distant wailing reached our camp I would mount my donkey and start off to meet the mourners in the cemetery. A number of *fuḳahā* were always present on these occasions, as it was their business to recite various passages from the Ḳorān by the gravesides, for which purpose they are hired by the visitors.

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Some of the women brought with them large baskets full of bread-rings, and with these they rewarded the *fuḳahā* for their recitations, which are believed to be of great benefit to the dead. The bread used on these occasions is in this part of Egypt nearly always made in the ring shape, and sweets of all kinds, cakes, etc., are also brought for distribution, especially by the richer people. There was usually a certain number of the very poorest people present, as well as children, who had come in the hope of receiving a share in the gifts. One of these suppliants might say, "*Iddīnī*

FIG. 53. WOMEN CROUCHING OVER A GRAVE

ḥaseneh, yā sitt" ("Give me *ḥaseneh*, O lady"). The word *ḥaseneh* means charity, and is a general term for the bread, etc., given away on these occasions; the bread, as I have mentioned above, being called *kaḥḳ*.

On presenting bread to the *fuḳahā* or to the poor the giver will say, "*Khud kaḥḳ ʿala rōḥ el-fulān*" ("Take a cake on behalf of the soul of so and so"), mentioning the name of the dead relation. It is quite a moving sight to see the faces of the women contorted with grief, the tears streaming down their cheeks, as they crouch over the graves, swaying backward and forward (Fig. 53). They hold in their hands coloured handkerchiefs, generally of silk, used only on these occasions or at a funeral. Sometimes a large one, often black with a coloured border, is doubled cornerwise and

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
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F 769 775 F [825]

That the souls of the dead come to the cemeteries is again shown in the following belief. I have been told by two or three of my village friends that when the people go to visit the cemetery, and they see a number of small green birds near the graves, they believe that these birds are the souls of the dead who lie buried there. Lane[1] says that "Souls of martyrs (*shuhadā*) reside in the crops of green birds, which eat of the fruits of Paradise and drink of its rivers." This is the belief as he heard it. It was definitely stated to me that the green birds *are* the souls of the dead.

F 764 765 784

There are certain taboos on mourners, two of which are the following. If a person, male or female, has attended a funeral and walked in the procession, or even only gone part of the way, he or she must not enter the house where a woman has a baby under seven days old, for this will cause the mother to have no milk. Such a person must inform the mother of the child that he desires to enter her house, and she must then go outside to meet the visitor, who can then come into it without any evil consequences.

F 765 753 784

Again, no such mourner must enter a house in which there is some one suffering from sore eyes, for in that case the sufferer will lose his or her sight. Such intending visitors must wait outside the house, and the man or woman who has sore eyes must come out and meet them there first, and then they can enter without danger.

F 764

The death and funeral rites of the Copts are in many respects very similar to those of the Muslims.

The following incidents were witnessed by me several years ago when I was staying in a small village in Fayûm Province, and this account of what I actually saw will best describe the ceremonies incident to the death and burial of a Copt. It must always be remembered that these are accounts of death and funeral rites as practised by the peasants only, and that they are not meant to be a description of the ceremonies which take place among educated people on similar occasions.

F [492]

Early one morning a visitor brought to the house where I was staying the news of the death of a poor but much respected Copt who lived in an adjacent village. It was suggested that his relations and friends would much appreciate a visit from me, so I started off on my donkey as soon as possible after the sad tidings had reached me. It was not long before I arrived at the house of

[1] *The Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* (London, 1871), vol. i, p. 83.

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt
COPTS MR10

mourning, which could easily be distinguished by the number of men seated outside it; these observed almost complete silence, instead of carrying on an animated conversation as they would have done in happier circumstances.

I was courteously received by the men and conducted to the apartment in which the women were assembled. The house was one of the type always to be found in Egyptian villages, built of crude bricks, and with steep, rough steps inside the building leading up to the roof. In the first room which we entered lay the coffin—a long, narrow box, made of planks of wood hastily nailed together, over which was stretched a covering of black cloth decorated with white crosses and other designs in *appliqué*. We passed through this room into an inner apartment, in which a large number of women were sitting on the ground, uttering from time to time piercing cries of grief. The sister of the dead man came toward me, her hair and dress dishevelled. As she advanced she swayed from side to side in a kind of dance, keeping both arms extended. She at once conducted me into a small room which led out of that occupied by the women. It was dark except for a glimmer of light which penetrated through the half-open door. A mattress was on the floor—indeed, it occupied most of the available space—and on it was stretched the body of the dead man, covered with a coloured sheet. From the end of the room, which was in pitch darkness, came the piercing cries of wailing women. Presently the sister drew aside the coverlet and invited me to take a seat on the mattress beside the dead man. This was no doubt very polite of her, but it was rather more than I could stand—not that I feared the dead, but because the mattress was almost certain to be covered with vermin. I managed to evade the offer without hurting anyone's feelings, and returned to the larger concourse of women in the adjoining room. Each of these women had a coloured handkerchief—green, blue, or purple, or some of these colours combined—such as are carried by women at all funerary ceremonies. Some of them possessed two such handkerchiefs knotted together. They held them in front of them, stretched out at full length, and as they swayed from side to side, wailing and bemoaning the dead, they would wave the handkerchiefs up and down. The faces of the women, as well as their hands and arms, were smeared with blue dye.

Presently I went out to speak to the men, who evidently dis-

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
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approved of the way the women were conducting themselves. They asked me if such things were done in Oxford when there was a death. I said " No," and explained that at such times there was always perfect quiet in a well-conducted household.

"*Aḥsan, aḥsan khāliṣ*" (" Better, much better "), they replied.

Just then a number of women came running out of the house, followed by the dead man's sister. They rushed into a small palm-grove which faced the house and began a weird dance, the sister standing in their midst. The last-mentioned had, on leaving the house, made for a muck-heap which lay near the entrance, and, thrusting her hands into it, covered her face, arms, and clothes with mud, and finally clapped a large lump of it on to the top of her head. As the women went round and round in a circle they chanted a mournful song, violently smiting their cheeks with both hands, in rhythmic accompaniment to the singing.

They soon worked themselves up into a perfect frenzy ; the sister fell back two or three times, almost fainting, whereupon the men entreated me to induce her to return to the house. This I at last succeeded in doing, with the assistance of one of the male relations, who were apparently thoroughly ashamed of this wild exhibition of grief. When we had got her safely into the house she sat down on the ground with some of the other women, including the dead man's wife. The latter, by the way, took quite a secondary place in these ceremonies. The blood-tie is the strongest in Egypt, and the wife has to take second place to the sister on such occasions.

The sister now began a long oration in praise of her dead brother, in which the other women joined at intervals, in a kind of chorus. She kept on pointing wildly toward the door of the room in which the dead man lay, while she and her companions uttered cries of "*Yā akhūi, yā akhūi !*" (" O my brother, my brother ! ").

By this time two or three men were busy washing the corpse and preparing it for burial. Presently one of them came out to fetch the wrappings, which had been placed on the floor of an outer room. These wrappings consisted of white and green cotton cloths, as the relations of the dead man were too poor to afford silk, the white being wound round the body first, the green cloth providing the outer covering, as is also the case with Muslims. After a few minutes the door again opened and the men came out to get the coffin. As they were carrying it into the death-chamber the women became frantic (they had by this time been joined by

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
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the dancing women from outside), and the men had some difficulty in getting past them into the room again and closing the door. The sister got up and rushed toward the door leading into the room where her dead brother lay, crying out to him, "*Ta'āla, ta'āla!*" ("Come, come!"), the mourning women at the same time uttering their piercing cries of grief, so that the din was deafening. As the men came out with the coffin, which now contained the body, the pandemonium became greater than ever

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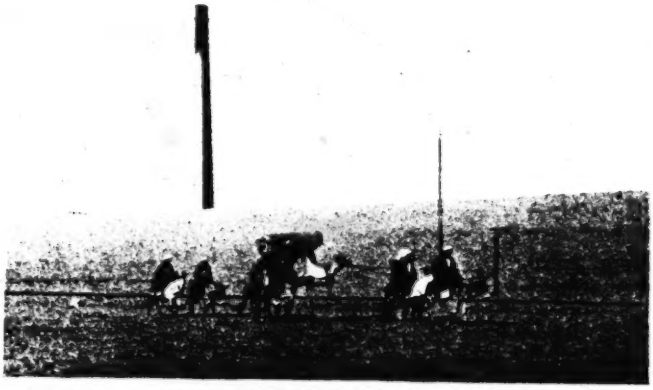

FIG. 55. COPTIC FUNERAL: COFFIN ON CAMEL'S BACK

The women shrieked, and the sister tore off her veil (at other times considered a most immodest thing to do), wrenched her dress open at the throat, and rent her garments to such a degree that her female companions, for decency's sake, were obliged to restrain her. The coffin was then placed on the ground, and the women seated themselves round it. They hammered with their fists on the lid, shrieking to the dead man, and flinging their arms wildly about in the air. The sister so completely lost her self-control that I urged the men to advance and take up the coffin. After some difficulty they managed to hoist it up on to their shoulders, and, followed by a crowd of screaming women, at last got out of the house. The coffin was placed on the back of a donkey, though a camel is more often used (see Fig. 55), and the procession set off for the Coptic monastery situated in the desert a few miles away.

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2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
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I mounted my donkey and accompanied them. The women went only a short way with us, and we left them, the hysterical sister in their midst, huddled together on the high road which led through the cultivation, still shrieking, smiting their faces, and waving their arms aloft. As we passed on toward the peaceful desert their cries grew fainter and fainter in the distance, till at last no sound broke the stillness save the occasional singing of a hymn by the men who formed the funeral *cortège*.

E 764 346 152 793

When we arrived at the gate of the monastery every one passed within the precincts, and the bearers carried the coffin into the church, setting it down in front of the curtain behind which was the altar. We all entered the sacred building, and a seat was offered to me close to the corpse. There was a large assembly of both Copts and Muslims, for the dead man was much respected by the followers of both religions among whom he had lived. We waited and waited, but still there was no sign of a priest. The men beguiled the time by talking and smoking, and, though I am sure it was not at all intentional, there was an extraordinary lack of reverent demeanour in those present. At last the priest arrived. The whole congregation immediately rose to their feet, and after the priest had shaken hands with me the others came forward in turns and kissed his hand. The lid of the coffin was now removed, and the body disclosed, wrapped in its white and green coverings. A very dirty cloth, on which was sewn a cross in green, was placed over the body, and candles were lighted and stuck to the sides of the coffin—six on each side and one each at the head and feet. This was accomplished by dropping some of the melting wax from the lighted candles on to the coffin and sticking the candles on to it. Two larger candles were fitted into large candlesticks placed on either side of the head of the coffin. These candlesticks were possibly of silver, but were in such a dirty state that it was impossible to guess with any certainty of what they were made.

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The service then began. It was very long, lasting for three hours or more! The priest was accompanied by the *'arīf*, as the man who leads the singing in a Coptic church is called. The latter was quite blind, and had a very resonant voice. When he sang he accompanied himself on a pair of cymbals. There was a great deal of this 'music,' and also recitations by the priest of portions of the Gospels. Furthermore, another man, whom he singled out from among those present, likewise read passages from the

F C [537]

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
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Scriptures. After interminable readings and chantings there was a pause, and one of the mourners present clapped his hands, thus commanding the attention of every one in the church. He then began the funeral oration, extolling the dead man and mentioning many of his good deeds. He spoke with great fervour and sincerity, though he was himself a Muslim, and I much admired his restrained gestures, his fluency, and his clear enunciation. He was really a good speaker and entirely devoid of self-consciousness. After the speech was ended the candles were put out and removed from the sides of the coffin, the lid was replaced, the bearers hoisted the coffin on to their shoulders, and, preceded by the priest and the *'arīf*, walked three times round the church, followed by all the mourners. After the third perambulation they came down the centre of the building, and so out of the church to the place of burial.

There is no service at the grave among the Copts, and after loud-voiced and conflicting advice from every man in the crowd assembled round the grave the coffin was at last successfully lowered to its final resting-place, a vault in which a number of interments had already been made. Finally the opening to the vault was bricked up and the earth flung back into its place again, and we all set off for our several abodes.

The mourning at the house usually lasts for seven days, as with the Muslims, though the period is sometimes reduced to three days only. During those seven or three days, according to one of my Coptic informants, no food is cooked in the house of mourning, but supplies are brought in by village friends. According to the same informant, prayers are offered up in the church by the priest on the third, seventh, fifteenth, and fortieth days after a death; these prayers are believed to be the means of saving a lost soul. During the fifteen days the house of mourning is not swept, but no reason was given for this custom.

On the third day after a death has taken place a priest, attended by the *'arīf*, goes to the house of the dead man or woman. Some of the uneducated Copts believe that the priest on this occasion dismisses the soul of the dead person from the house, where it is believed to remain until that day. I was present for this ceremony after the death of the Copt whose funeral I described above. As his relations were very poor people the ceremony was doubtless far less elaborate than it would be in the case of people in a better position.

753 pain from the rheumatism less. The incisions were made once
757 only, but the juice from the garlic was squeezed over the cuts every
978 day. At the end of a fortnight, so I was told, the man was completely cured! I fancy that the peasants believe that the rheumatism, or, at any rate, the cause of it, comes away in what they call "the yellow water."

755 Sometimes a silk thread is drawn through the skin in the region of the stomach as a cure for a pain in that organ. The skin is picked up between the finger and thumb, and a needle threaded with silk is passed through it lengthways. The silk thread is then roughly tied and left in the skin for about six days. Then it is drawn slightly to the left or right, when it is probably found to be covered with pus. A day or two after it is drawn in the opposite direction, when more pus will be removed. This process is repeated on several successive days, until all signs of pus have disappeared. There is a raised scar left when the skin has healed. Sometimes a silk thread is drawn through the outer edge of the upper part of the ear as a cure for fever, in the case both of children and grown-up people. To cure pain in the side, stomach, or back a small plain ring is inserted in the upper edge of the ear.

A person suffering from a cough takes one of the strings which form the warp of a reed mat and places one end on the top of his head, holding it there, while the other end is passed round one of his toes, or is held on the ground by his feet. The string is then
● [764] placed inside the wrappings of a person who has just died, and is thus carried to the grave. The cough of the living person disappears. The same remedy is employed for fever and shivering, only a knot must then be made near one end of the string.

978 As a cure for diarrhœa some leaves from a sycamore are dried
757 in the oven, or in the sun if it is very hot. When dry the leaves are pounded into a powder, of which the patient takes two teaspoonfuls, mixed with a little sugar, every morning. It usually takes two days to effect a cure, though it may sometimes take a little longer.

As a cure for inflamed or sore eyes the dung of a black donkey (a male) is made hot in the fire, put in a piece of muslin, and then applied. This treatment must be repeated constantly, a fresh poultice being administered as soon as the first is cold, and so on till the eye is cured. After a time, according to my informant, a

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remove it, or its *ʿafrīt* would for ever haunt the house. As it was a hopeless case I gave my servant a revolver and told him to shoot the dog. This he did, but he first took it away to a more distant spot.

While I was in Egypt in 1925 a poor man who came to trade in the village in which I was staying was drowned. He had gone to the Baḥr el-Yūsuf canal to perform his ablutions before his morning prayers, but the water was deeper than he thought, and he was unable to swim. No one was near at the time, it being very early in the morning. As he did not return people went down to the canal to look for him, and found his clothes on the bank. A large crowd collected, but nothing was done till early in the afternoon. The officials had been informed of the accident, but no doubt more pressing business detained them, and in any case they had to come from some distance. I went down and mixed with the crowd. The man's wife, mother, and little son were standing close to the water's edge, accompanied by numbers of sympathizers. The women were gesticulating and wailing, as they always do after a death, and were waving the blue and black handkerchiefs used on such occasions. "O my father! O camel of the house!"[1] they cried. A boat was manned by two or three men with a line, to which large fishing-hooks were attached, by means of which they hoped to hook up the body. They had been searching one portion of the canal in this way for some time, with no result, when I suggested that they should try another part, in the direction of which the current was flowing. They followed my advice, and very soon found the body. It was placed on the shore and immediately surrounded by a large crowd, which, after some time, dispersed, and then I saw the mother and wife of the dead man, one seated at the head and the other at the feet. I was strongly reminded of the ancient representations of Isis and Nephthys bewailing the dead Osiris. After this accident I was told by some of the villagers that no woman would go alone to fill her water-jar at that spot for fear of the drowned man's *ʿafrīt*, which would always remain in the water. It might be a good *ʿafrīt*, and then it would do no injury; but—who could tell?—it might be bad!

A few years ago some women in a neighbouring village had gone

[1] The camel, being a beast of burden and a means of livelihood among the peasants, typifies the breadwinner of the family.

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and bead bracelets, bunches of human hair, handkerchiefs, first-fruits of the cornfields, and so on. Each one registers an answered prayer, for the people flock in crowds to these tombs on certain days of the week—usually Thursdays or Fridays—generally to make some special request, or with the object of being freed from some disease, which they believe the sheikh can cure. A childless woman, or persons possessed by *ʿafārīt*, will come to beg the sheikh to intercede for them. Indeed, the performances of certain rites at the tomb may in themselves effect a cure.

Having removed his or her shoes before entering the building, the visitor then walks from left to right round the catafalque erected beneath the dome three, five, or seven times, reciting meanwhile special passages from the Ḳorān. These perambulations accomplished, the servant of the sheikh takes a broom, kept for this special purpose, and carefully brushes out all the footprints in the interior of the building.

Sick animals are also brought by their owners to a sheikh's tomb, round which they are driven seven times.

In one of the provinces of Upper Egypt, on the lower desert, stands the domed tomb of the sheikh Ḥasan ʿAli (Fig. 139). It is surrounded by a low mud-brick wall, which encloses a few small trees, a well, and two or three graves, wherein relatives of the dead sheikh lie buried. Pots of *ṣabr* (aloes) also decorate the sacred spot, for this plant is believed to bring happiness to the dead. The building is whitewashed, and is decorated with line-drawings in red and blue, illustrating the pilgrimage to Mecca. The surrounding desert is covered with the graves of more ordinary folk. These are marked by heaps of sand, into which are stuck branches of palm-trees, for palm-branches, like the aloe-plants, are believed to be the means of conveying happiness to the dead who lie beneath.

The sheikh Ḥasan ʿAli was only eighteen years old when he died, but from his earliest years he was noted for his piety. He was educated at a small school in his native village, and, as soon as he had learned to read, he spent all his leisure moments studying the Ḳorān. When he died he was buried in an ordinary grave in the lower desert among his dead fellow-villagers. However, one day, when old ʿAli (his father) was squatting on a *maṣṭabeh* (see p. 32), with his head resting on his hand, his dead son appeared before him and caught hold of him by the wrist, saying, " I am very angry."

His father said, " Why are you angry, my son ? "

THE FELLĀḤĪN OF UPPER EGYPT

964 The mother of this Sheikh, who was very devoted to her son, did not survive him for many years. I was present at her funeral, which was attended by a large crowd of friends and relatives. She was buried in a grave near the tomb of her saintly son.

792 158 The sheikh ʿAbdu ʾl-Laṭīf lived in a small village in Middle Egypt, where some of his family still reside. An old man, the son of the sheikh's paternal uncle, is well known to me.[1] The sheikh ʿAbdu ʾl-Laṭīf was, in his lifetime, looked upon as a *walī*.[2] Insanity is the usual qualification for this high standing among the Muslim saints of Egypt, persons thus afflicted being regarded as the favourites of God. The sheikh had a habit of entering the houses of the people at night, after the doors had been locked, and while the evening meal was being cooked; for locked doors formed no barriers to the egress or ingress of this holy man. On entering [264] he would immediately eat up all the food; meat, bread, and vegetables, no matter how large the quantity, would all be devoured on the spot. Any glass bottles that happened to be lying about might be included in this repast, for these he would bite up and [152] swallow without drawing any blood. There was only one thing he feared, and that was water. If anyone threw a few drops of water at him he would run away in terror, as fast as his legs could carry him. My informant remembered him well, and he told me that on one occasion the sheikh entered his house after the entrance door had been securely locked and ate up all the food, including soup prepared for the evening meal.

792 766 778 [769] When the sheikh died hundreds of people attended his funeral, and, being a very good man, he made his bearers walk quickly to the grave.[3] Above it has been erected the usual domed tomb; it is situated near that of the venerated sheikh Umbārak (Fig. 140) for whom a *mūlid*, or festival, is held once every year.[4]

769 688 One year, on the occasion of this festival, a man climbed on to the outside of the tomb of the sheikh ʿAbdu ʾl-Laṭīf without first removing his shoes. Some of the people standing round remonstrated with him for this act of irreverence, but he replied, "Who is the sheikh ʿAbdu ʾl-Laṭīf? He is nobody!" and refused to climb down or to take off his shoes. However, when he wanted

[1] At the moment of writing this I received a letter from Egypt telling me of this old man's death. He is the same man who divorced his wife by the triple [586] divorce, described in Chapter V, pp. 95f.

[2] *Walī* means 'friend' (*i.e.*, of God), and a Muslim saint is commonly so designated.

[3] See Chapter VII, p. 113.

[4] See Chapter XVI, pp. 252 ff.

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
MR13 Fellahin MR13
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land. Such suppliants are constantly arriving to receive their donations during the whole of the first day of this festival, while coffee, sweets, and cakes are distributed to other friends who come to pay visits of congratulation. Prayers are offered in the mosques, which are filled with worshippers. On the first day of this festival all who can afford it sacrifice a ram (thus calling to mind the ram substituted for Isaac) outside the house, and sprinkle some of its blood on the house-door.[1]

FIG. 147. A CEMETERY CROWDED WITH VISITORS ON THE DAY OF THE LITTLE FESTIVAL

Once when visiting the house of some of my village friends I found that not only was such a sacrifice in prospect, but another ram was also to be killed for the following reason. The woman's only son had been very ill some two or three years before, and in her despair she had made a vow to some sheikh that if her son recovered she would kill a ram as a thank-offering on the first day of *el-ʿId el-Kibīr* every year for the rest of her life (Fig. 148). The blood of this animal, however, was not sprinkled on the door.

Again on this festival the cemeteries are visited by crowds of people, many carrying palm-branches to be placed on the graves.

[1] *Cf.* the ancient Semitic custom of sprinkling blood on the doorposts, exemplified in one of the ceremonies of the Jewish Passover.

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F A 585

entertained all the household of Pharaoh." This account suggests that in ancient as in modern times the bride's furniture was conveyed with some ceremony from her parents' house to that of her husband (p. 93); we also see that the ancient like the modern bridegroom used to entertain his male friends on the night of his marriage (p. 93).

F A 586

It is stated on p. 95 that a sum of money is sometimes paid by the party who applies for a divorce to the other party. That, as can be seen from the ancient marriage-contract translated above, and from those published by Professor Griffith,[1] was the prevailing custom in late Pharaonic and Ptolemaic Egypt. Ancient bills of divorcement are still extant, the earliest dating from the time of Darius, and some of them have been published and translated by Professor Griffith.[2]

F A 847 789

It is interesting to observe, in connexion with the modern practice (p. 107) of a mother's attaching a small piece of fox-skin to the head of her last-born living child to ensure her bearing again, that the sign (*ms*), used in writing the verb *msy* (give birth) and its derivatives, consists in well-formed examples of three fox-skins tied together.[3] This suggests that there may have been some association of foxes with fertility in ancient Egypt.

F A 764 ● 778 823

The water used for washing a dead Muslim is brought either from a mosque or from some sacred well or pool connected with a sheikh (p. 109). Similarly, in ancient times the formulæ pronounced while the washing of the corpse took place state that the water has issued from Elephantine, and so is the exudation of Osiris, or that it has been drawn from some sacred pool connected with the sun-cult, or that it is the efflux of the sun-god or the womb of the sky-goddess out of which the god emerged.[4]

F [794]

That the washer of the corpse may be a *fiḳīh* (p. 109) shows that this performance still possesses some, though probably quite vague, religious significance.

080

The utterly uncontrolled grief displayed by the women when

[1] See p. 291, footnote 6.
[2] *Catalogue of the Demotic Papyri in the John Rylands Library*, vol. iii, p. 117.
[3] See A. M. Blackman, *Man*, vol. ix, pp. 9 f.; L. Borchardt, *Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache*, vol. xliv, pp. 75 f.; A. Erman, *Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache*, vol. xlv, p. 92.

A [113]

[4] See A. M. Blackman, *Recueil de travaux relatifs à la philologie et l'archéologie égyptiennes*, vol. xxxix, pp. 44 ff.; *Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archæology*, vol. xl, pp. 57–66, 86–91; *Journal of Egyptian Archæology*, vol. v, pp. 117 ff., 157 ff.

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THE FELLĀḤĪN OF UPPER EGYPT

The utterly uncontrolled grief displayed by the women when a death occurs (pp. 111 f., 122 ff.) is still admirably illustrated by a relief in an Old Kingdom tomb-chapel at Saḳḳāreh.[1] The widow is depicted as having collapsed in a faint on hearing of her husband's sudden death, and then, after having been restored to consciousness and dragged to her feet, as tottering along supported by two friends. The various attitudes of grief of the women surrounding the widow are characteristic of modern female mourners. It is interesting to observe, too, that one of the attendants holds the widow's necklace, which has been taken off on receipt of the news of her husband's death (*cf.* p. 50). Further proof that the modern Egpytian peasant women display their grief before and at a funeral by exactly the same gestures and conduct as did their ancestors—by dishevelling the hair, tearing the clothes, exposing the breasts, gathering up mud and with it plastering the head, breasts, and arms, and by wildly waving the arms and beating the head and breasts—is to be found in numbers of ancient paintings and reliefs.[2] An admirable example is the photograph

A
[212]
[532]

FIG. 162. WAILING WOMEN
After W. Wreszinski, *Atlas zur altaegyptischen Kulturgeschichte*, Pl. 8.

[1] J. Capart, *Une rue de tombeaux*, Pls. LXXXI f.

[2] See W. Spiegelberg, *The Credibility of Herodotus' Account of Egypt*, Fig. 5 on p. 33; W. Wreszinski, *Atlas zur altaegyptischen Kulturgeschichte*, Pls. 120, 166, 167, 209, 210; Norman de Garis Davies, *The Tomb of Two Sculptors at Thebes* (New York, 1925), Pls. XIX ff. (Pl. XXI shows a woman placing mud or dust on her head); Nina de Garis Davies and A. H. Gardiner, *The Tomb of Amenemhēt* (London, 1915), Pl. XXIV; G. Roeder, *Die Denkmäler des Pelizaeus Museums zu Hildesheim* (Berlin, 1921), pp. 111 f.

A
[113]

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(Fig. 162) of a painting in the tomb-chapel of Re'mōse at Thebes.

The attitude of the wailing mother in Fig. 50, p. 110, and Fig. 137, p. 236, finds an exact parallel in the wailing women depicted in a painting in the tomb-chapel of Amenemḥēt at Thebes.[1]

A [535] [532]
F A [822]

FIG. 163. FUNERARY DANCE PERFORMED BY FEMALE MOURNERS
After W. Wreszinski, *op. cit.*, Pl. 419.

The modern custom of smearing the hands, arms, and face with blue dye (pp. 111, 122, 264) may also be ancient, in view of blue having been the ancient mourning colour (p. 286); but, so far as my brother is aware, the ancient artists have not shown this in the pictures of wailing women.

The perambulation of the town or village by the female relatives and friends immediately after a death has taken place (p. 109) is described by Herodotus[2] in the following words:

> When a member of any distinction dies in an household, all the female members of that family besmear their heads and faces with mud, and then, leaving the corpse in the house, they parade the town, and smite themselves, having their garments girt up and their breasts exposed; and all their female kin accompany them.

The pre- and post-burial dance performed by the mourning women, described on pp. 114, 123, 263, finds close parallel in a relief from a New Kingdom tomb-chapel at Saḳḳāreh, now in the Cairo Museum (Fig. 163). As in the funerary dance described on p. 114, the women are dancing to the beating of single-membrane

A 764 765 535

[1] Nina de Garis Davies and A. H. Gardiner, *ibid.*, bottom register, left.
[2] ii, 85.

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A 764 765 535

drums. The attitude and motions of the wailing sister who advanced toward me with arms extended and swaying from side to side (p. 122) may perhaps be compared with those of the female dancers (musician-priestesses of Ḥatḥor) who are depicted performing at the funeral of Senet in that lady's tomb-chapel at Thebes.[1]

A 764

The viewing of the corpse by visitors and relatives, as it lies

FIG. 164. BRICK SUPERSTRUCTURE ABOVE A MIDDLE-KINGDOM GRAVE
After D. Randall-MacIver and C. L. Woolley, *Buhen*, Pl. 81.

extended on a bed, was evidently an ancient practice, for in a relief at el-ʿAmarneh [2] King Akhenaten and his wife Nefertiti are depicted taking a farewell look at the corpse of one of their daughters, which lies on a bed. Near at hand the women are wailing, as I have described them as doing in similar circumstances on p. 122.

F A 764

Palm-branches were carried in ancient, as they are in modern, funeral processions (p. 116), as can be seen from the picture of

A [113]

[1] Norman de Garis Davies, *The Tomb of Antefoker* (London, 1920), Pl. XXIII.
[2] A. Erman and H. Ranke, *Aegypten und aegyptisches Leben im Altertum*, p. 365, Fig. 164.

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ANCIENT EGYPTIAN ANALOGIES

the funeral procession of a Nineteenth-Dynasty priest named Kynebu in his tomb-chapel at Sheikh ʿAbd-el-Ḳurneh.[1] The custom of slaughtering an animal at the graveside on the occasion of a funeral (p. 110) is, of course, exceedingly ancient, and is referred to in the *Story of Sinuhe*: "slaughtering is made at the door of thy façade-stela."[2] Was the false door, one wonders, sprinkled with the victim's blood?

With the statement on pp. 113 f.,[3] that on returning from the funeral "the men seat themselves outside the doorway, where they are joined by friends," is to be compared a passage in a letter written to his dead wife by an official of the late New Kingdom: "I bewailed thee exceedingly along with my household in front of my dwelling."[4]

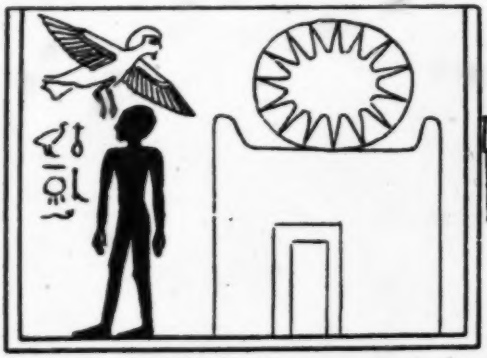

FIG. 165. SHADOW AND BAI OUTSIDE THE DOOR OF A TOMB

After E. Naville, *Das aegyptische Todtenbuch der XVIII bis XX Dynastie*, vol. i, Pl. CIV.

The rectangular brick superstructure of a modern grave, with its vaulted roof and door-like recess at one end (p. 116), closely resembles the superstructure of the ordinary middle-class grave of all periods (see, for example, Fig. 164).[5] Ancient examples of the large burial chamber with vaulted roof described on p. 116 are also to be found.[6]

The idea that a man's shadow is a separate entity (p. 113) also prevailed in ancient Egypt. A vignette in an Eighteenth-Dynasty copy of *The Book of the Dead* depicts a man's shadow

[1] J. G. Wilkinson, *The Ancient Egyptians* (London, 1878), vol. iii, Pl. LXIX.

[2] A. Erman, *The Literature of the Ancient Egyptians*, p. 24; A. M. Blackman, *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*, vol. x, p. 199.

[3] *Cf.* also pp. 121 f.

[4] A. M. Blackman, *Luxor and its Temples*, p. 25.

[5] *E.g.*, W. M. F. Petrie, *Tarkhan* (London, 1914). Part II, Pl. XV; D. Randall-MacIver and C. L. Woolley, *Buhen* (Philadelphia, 1911), Pls 77–82.

[6] D. Randall-MacIver and C. L. Woolley, *op. cit.*, Pl. 84; H. Schaefer and W. Andrae, *Die Kunst des alten Orients*, p. 266, Fig. 2.

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
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THE FELLĀḤĪN OF UPPER EGYPT.

In view of the evidence obtained from the meaning of the names given to both the ancient and the modern rite, together with many similarities in the funerary ritual of the ancient and modern Egyptians, as well as the interesting fact that 'the going up' was in both instances to the desert, we have distinct justification for supposing that the modern ceremonies are in origin pre-Christian and pre-Islamic, and are direct ritualistic survivals from the earliest period of Egyptian history. One realizes this all the more fully when one reads Professor Breasted's or Dr Reisner's vivid account of the observances in the cemetery at Asyūṭ during an annual festival in the time of the Middle Kingdom.[1] In the modern as in the ancient festivals quantities of loaves of bread are brought to the tomb, incense is burned (see p. 266), and victims are slain (p. 260). The burning of incense was, of course, a most important and prominent feature of the ancient funerary ceremonial, and the dead were supposed to take a special delight in smelling it,[2] and also to derive benefit therefrom.[3]

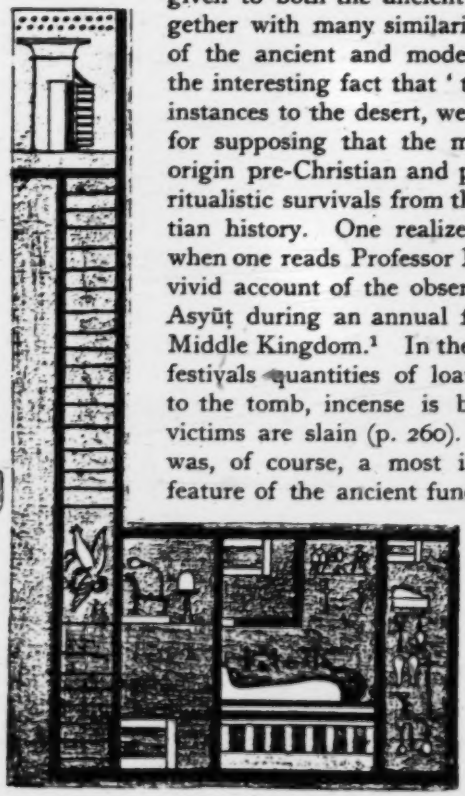

FIG. 166. THE SOUL DESCENDING THE BURIAL-SHAFT
After G. Maspero, *The Dawn of Civilization* (London, 1894), p. 198.

The modern conception that the soul visits the body on the day of the *ʕala'* (pp. 117, 120) finds an excellent parallel in a well-known vignette in *The Book of the Dead* depicting the soul (*bai*) in the form of a bird, descending the shaft admit-

[1] J. H. Breasted, *Development of Religion and Thought in Ancient Egypt* (London, 1912), pp. 259 ff.; G. A. Reisner, *Journal of Egyptian Archæology*, vol. v, p. 92. Dr Reisner, speaking of the jars of beer, loaves of bread, and the roast meat presented to Djefaihap's statue on the great New Year's festival, says: "All these offerings were, of course, distributed to the poor or to such scribes as came to repeat the offering formula before the statue. In modern practice, the scribe reads or recites a chapter from the Korân, repeating it over and over according to what he receives."

[2] See, *e.g.*, A. M. Blackman, *Rock Tombs of Meir* (London, 1924), Part IV, p. 22.

[3] A. M. Blackman, *Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache*, vol. l, pp. 69 ff.

778 the patron saint of the village, who is called 'Sheikh' or 'Wali' or 'Sidi' So-and-So.

The monument usually stands outside the built-up area, often close to a well or a canal and shaded by trees, which are themselves the objects of veneration. It consists as a rule of a cubical building about twenty feet square, topped by a dome (*qubba*), and whitewashed all over. The sheikh's body does not always lie within. There may be only [782] an empty tomb surrounded by palm branches, candles, shreds of cloth, bits of hair, and harvest offerings. The caretaker of the tomb is maintained by the community, or by the income of a pious foundation (*waqf*). His post is often hereditary.

796 The day of the *mulid*, or anniversary of the holy man, 527 is a great holiday for the villagers. All of them make their way to the holy spot and go through the traditional ceremonies — dances, circuit of the tomb, and incantations (50).

● 764 The resting-place of the dead is some distance from the homes of the living. The cemetery is always a piece of waste land, unfit for cultivation, on the débris of an abandoned village (*tell* or *kom*), or on the sand below the cliffs at the desert edge. Sometimes, as at Minia, it lies on the other side of the Nile. The village of the dead is made up of separate tombs packed closely one against the other. They may be rectangular cemented blocks with pillars at head and foot, or simply mounds sprinkled all over with white pebbles or marked by two rough stones or a couple of vertical palm branches which are renewed every year. There are no in- [769] scriptions and no flowers, but every family knows where its dead are buried, and comes to visit them on the first day of the Great Bairam, when the whole village goes off to the cemetery to honour the dead and to feast and make holiday [527] over their tombs. On that day the village is as empty and deserted as it is in October, when everyone has gone out to pick the cotton.

361 It is not yet time for us to go inside the village. In 312 artists' pictures of Egyptian villages there is always a pool 311 to reflect the dull mass of houses with its coronet of trees. 316 In reality this pool is a large greenish pond of stagnant water, as poisonous as it is picturesque. Nearly every village has one, almost out of necessity. To build houses, make bricks, engineer a watercourse or strengthen a dyke, local

754 with the pre-Islamic and pre-Christian magic of Ancient Egypt.(51)

This affinity is confirmed by the faith of the fellaheen in everything that represents itself to be ancient, primitive, *qadîm*. For many of their superstitious beliefs they can give
792 no other reason. Why is a Coptic monk preferred as a
842 sorcerer? Why should the touching of ancient statues
777 make a woman conceive? Why should a pebble or written charm from the sorcerer give effect to a wish? Because it is *qadîm*. Because it holds in itself the power of the past.

● 764 The function of women mourners is also traditional. A
[765] fellah dies. At once loud cries from the womenfolk announce it to all the neighbourhood. The common bier is fetched from its place near the *gurn* outside the village. Women wash the body in warm water within the house, while outside rise the wailings of the mourning women.

In their funeral cries they boast of the beauty and fine qualities of the departed, they reproach God for taking him, they call to the dead man, to his wife and children, they cry out to Death itself. These complaints seem natural and improvised. In fact they are no more so than the tears of
[767 the professional mourners, wrapped in great veils (*milayas*)
535] specially for this ceremony, their face coloured black or blue as a sign of mourning, their heads sprinkled with mud. Leading the womenfolk in a ghastly dance, they rise, clap their hands, sway about and fall exhausted, now slackening, now hurrying their cries. Here the women take first place. The men put in an appearance, both at the funeral and on the visit of sympathy, for death is a part of public life. But they participate only by their presence; they say nothing. In silence they follow the bier, clasp the hand of the nearest relation, stay seated for some time by the dead man's house, and make their way home again(51a).

533 Other occasions, less frequent but more joyful, bring the
538 fellaheen together for music and story-telling. The man who brings them these hours of pleasure is the *sha'ir*, reciter, storyteller and singer all in one. He is himself a fellah, but an exceptionally gifted one. It is his melodious voice that has singled him out for the musician's life, but he also ac-
[534] companies himself on the *rebâba*, a single-stringed, sharp-toned violin. He will sing the praises of Mohammed or Jesus, describing the Prophet's appearance in naive, highly-

or like a silver thread in the distance. He resorts to it more often than to his fellowmen. He does not pray to it, as his ancestors did, but he constantly visits it. The Nile is in his blood. There is the same intimate bond between the Nile and the fellaheen as between the sea and the fishermen of Brittany. They even call it *el Bahr*, the sea, and their fields they call "shores" (*el rîf* — plural *el ariaf* — the usual word for the Egyptian countryside) (ʿa). At High Nile they believe women to be more fertile and men more healthy; marriages are most often celebrated at this season. If a child is sickly or ill, his mother takes him on the Nile at this time, and makes him throw sweets and dates into the clayey waters, with the words "Oh Nile, let my strength grow like your depth". A dying fellah, before he breathes his last, is given a final draught of its living water.

In the Coptic Mass there is the following prayer: "Vouchsafe, O Lord, to bless this year the water of the river. By Thy grace bring it to due height. Gladden the face of the land, that the fields may have water and the crops be multiplied."

The silt of the Nile has its part also in the rites of life and death. The fellâha, when her time is coming, crawls to the brink of the water and takes up a handful of moist earth, which she will swallow at the time of delivery to ensure a successful birth.

When the *mizayen* cuts the child's hair for the first time, the hair ceremoniously cut off is not flung to the winds, but carefully rolled into a ball of earth.

Professional mourners bedaub their breasts, heads, and arms with mud as a sign of grief. The body is put into the earth without either coffin or clothes.

The fellaheen bury in the earth the jar containing their savings, and charms which they wish to take effect. Every birth affects the soil; the after-brith is buried inside the house, and the umbilical cord, wrapped up in a little bag with a few grains of corn, is dug into the father's field.

The fruits of the earth are still more closely involved in this peasant mysticism. The analogies between vegetable life and the peasants' own extremely physical existence make them believe in an interplay of fertility between the two.

The ceremonies of the seventh day, when the newly-born child is washed and given a name, often include the following

F 823
F [842 827]
F [755]
F [763]
C 782 823
F 843 844 261
F 852
F 764
F 454 789 844
F 842 812
F 553 852

3: Ayrout M-5 (ca. 1935) 1945
MR13 Fellahin MR13

PEASANT FUNERALS

764
133
291

Men and Women

A PEASEANT FAMILY

515
585
292
352
231
415

A head toilet.

The wedding procession

3: Ayrout M-5 (ca. 1935) 1945
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Copts MR10

APPENDIX A

A NOTE ON MOURNING CUSTOMS

Both Christians and Moslems, at the feasts of Christmas and Easter, or the Little and Great Bairam (*), have a custom of going to pray at the tombs of their dead. On these days the cemetery takes on the appearance of a market, in which people of all conditions meet together. Families are continuously arriving. The camel is used to transport the provisions, bedding, boxes and kitchen-ware. Sometimes the Nile has to be crossed. The people crowd pell-mell into ferry boats, weighing them down till they are almost awash. The children, with their best clothes on, are delighted with the journey, but the women are weeping. When they visit the cemetery for the first time after a burial they cry out in grief, calling on the dead. Some of them stain their faces with blue and wave their handkerchiefs. I have seen old women scarcely able to walk and broken down by age and sickness, dragging themselves on this funeral pilgrimage, which they feel obliged to make, and from which they may never return.

Then the blood of sacrifice flows over the tomb, and the meat is given to the poor. Such libations and charitable offerings are supposed to comfort the souls of the dead. The goats and sheep, feeling their end approaching, cry aloud in despair. Yet in the dazzling sunshine, the clouds of dust, the tumult of the crowd, there is something of the holiday spirit. Hawkers temptingly display their wares, little cafés are opened, swings draw the children away. The families separate, each to visit its own. The upper part of the tomb is often built into a dome or living-space. Here the family will settle itself, to weep for hour after hour, or to sleep. Happy are the dead who are remembered, and happier still those for whom prayers are said.

When someone dies in the village, there is always a *mandara* (sitting-room) or a tent where the people go to offer

C F 764 their sympathy to the dead man's family. The space set apart for the women is filled with wailing, but the men await the visitors in solemn silence. Everyone stands up at a new arrival, and greets him with a good wish.

C F 574 764 "The remainder to your life", they say, meaning "Whatever is out off from his life, may God add it to yours, and give you a long life." The answer is "Life is God's". Everyone sits down without more ado. Then, as if he had been searching the depths of his soul for the right words, the newcomer breaks the silence. He quotes sayings, proverbs, or passages from the Holy Books, consoling sentences about the inevitability of death, resignation to the will of God, the holy life of the deceased, the rewards promised to the just, and the courage which men should show in bereavement. One saying calls forth another and one passage is echoed by another of the same kind. Tongues are loosened. The orators show their skill. It is curious to see how much sympathy is shown on the occasion of a death. To comfort the bereaved, folk think nothing of a three hours' walk or the loss of a day's work.

Friends sit up all night with the family, giving the comfort of their presence and their ready help. Death is the great leveller, and provides a centre of attraction. Religious differences disappear and social classes come closer together. Moslems and Christians meet one another in commemoration of the dead ; rich and poor are united around a tomb.

E. Fellert, S.J. (*Minia*)

3: Ayrout M-5 (ca. 1935) 1945
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Copts MR10

APPENDIX B

DIRGE FOR A YOUNG MAN

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1. Men and women, he who is absent has a friend, a friend
Who has passed his life in tears and lamentation.
Men and women, he who is absent has a friend whom he grieves,
Whom he wounds to the heart on a day most bitter.

2. Men and women, he who is absent has a friend who weeps,
Whose heart is wounded on a day of gloom.
Oh my delight, you who are gone were like green grass
Or a young pigeon whose feathers are not yet grown.

3. They told me he was ill. I went in to see him.
He lies unconscious, and around him there is wailing.
Very ill he is, and now the illness deepens,
And even the doctor can do no more for him.

4. Please God they will be sold in the market!
Come and buy them, you who are in need!
Please God they will be sold under the hammer!
Come and buy them, you who have no children!

5. "If I am long away, you must break my pen."
Yes, and your ink-well, my darling.
"If I am long away, break pen and pencil."
Yes, and your ink-well too, my dear.

6. At the news of their death, my dress gets tangled,
And the mistress of the harem loses her wits.
At the news of their death, my clothes are in disorder,
And the mistress of the harem out of her senses.

3: Ayrout M-5 (ca. 1935) 1945
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Copts MR10

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7. The way to the church shall be strewn with roses ;
Please God they will come to me on the eve of Sunday !
The way to the church shall be strewn with jasmine ;
Please God they will come to me at the feast of the Khamseen !

8. "You do not know my agony, you who sit at my side ;
"You are in one state and I in another.
"You do not know my agony, you who sit at my side ;
"You are in one state, and I all alone in another."

9. You were well ; what has happened then ?
Did it come on in the evening, or when was it ?
When they told me he was ill, I went in to see him.
The man who was so alive is lying senseless.

10. What did you do in the hour when your soul departed ?
"I drank gall in great draughts of bitterness."
What did you do then in the hour of your soul's departure ?
You drank gall in great draughts of bitterness.

Collected in 1941 *at Matay-Bardanooha*
by E. Tewfik.

COMMENTARY

The mourner speaks in the person first of the dead man's friend, then of his mother, and finally also of the dead man himself, without any clear transition. Only the dead youth's words are put between quotation marks. F 764

4. The dead youth was his mother's only surviving son. To give her some consolation the mourner expresses a wish, which cannot be realised, to see children on sale in the market. Adoption is in Egypt an institution copied from abroad. In Upper Egypt it is still unknown even among Christians. Moslem law forbids it. C F [547]

5. To the mother the boy's writing-materials are precious reminders of his youthful promise.

6. Here the mourner describes the mother's dismay at the news of her son's death. The shock is so great that she can no longer put her clothes on straight. C F [152]

7. By Upper Egyptian women Sundays and festivals are observed as days for commemoration of the dead. To show their grief they keep away from church, even for years at a time. At Christmas and Easter the churches are deserted. On the other hand a crowd of women come to disturb the quiet of the cemetery with their tears and shrieks. This Pagan custom is to some extent Christianised by the distribution of gifts to the poor (meat, cakes, etc.) for the repose of the souls of the dead. C F 794 765 769 735

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[N6A]

FIG. 1.—STONE OF THE SHEIKHA FATIMEH.

FIG. 2.—RUINED GRAVES AT LAHÛN, IN THE APERTURES OF WHICH CHILDREN ARE PLACED WHEN AFFECTED BY THE MOTHER'S ḥarîmeh.

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FIG. 3.—CHARM AND CHARM SQUARE WORN BY AN EXPECTANT MOTHER.

THE KARÎN AND KARÎNEH.

[Facing p. 168]

9: Klunzinger D-5 (1863-1875) 1878
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with beauty-spots, her tender limbs can scarcely support all her heavy ornaments of gold and silver, her armlets, bracelets, anklets, crown, hair-chains, and other trinkets. The silken jacket falls smoothly over her breast, that scarcely as yet shows any swelling. The doll-bride blushes in childish modesty, and, instead of her husband, not seldom wishes—her playthings. He, however, intimates to her, in the name of God, the all-merciful, that he has become her husband. If the bridegroom has had reason to be satisfied with his bride, the women who have been in attendance on the pair utter cries of pleasure, and the joy passes through the whole house, and extends to the people collected below. Ceremonies very similar were customary in the middle ages also among our German forefathers.

Early on the morning after this "night of access" there is much congratulation in the house of feasting; the guests receive coffee, and are sprinkled with rose-water, which they rub on their hair, their beards, faces, and hands. The ancient Egyptians used to anoint themselves with ointments, but this is no longer practised. On this day the bridegroom takes a walk in the open air in his red coat with some of his comrades and sings pious songs; for three days or more he goes about without engaging in any occupation, and at this time displays an extraordinarily serious mien.

A man that marries a second time invites only his nearer relatives and friends, or a scribe, to the betrothal feast in his house. Thereupon the marriage contract is drawn up, the dowry paid, a prayer uttered, and he has now free access to his betrothed.

FUNERAL CEREMONIES.

A shrill cry, as loud as the female falsetto can produce, pierces the air, first one, then another, then several, then ever so many. A soul has departed. The cry was the wail of sorrow uttered by the women concerned, and at the same time the signal which brings up crowds of women to lament along with them. On the street, before the house of mourn-

9: Klunzinger D-5 (1863-1875) 1878
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764 ing, a long row of straw mats and carpets is laid, on which
152 sit many men silently smoking their chibooks. Some men and boys, connections of the departed, run to and fro on the street uttering cries of grief and covering their faces with their hands. "Oh, my father," they cry (or "mother," "brother," &c., as the case may be), "Oh, my sorrow, my death; oh, despair; oh, my strength; oh, camel of my house" [825] (camel as a symbol of strength or support). Friends show their sympathy and attempt to give consolation, but even men, [562] at other times so undemonstrative, weep loudly and give themselves up to grief. What, then, is to be expected of the women, with their more easily excited feelings? They put on the dirtiest dark-blue dresses they can find, loosen their hair, and display their breasts, smear these and their faces with filth, pluck out their hair and tear their own flesh in a frenzy of grief. All order ceases, the loud outcry is raised again and again by the mourning-women hired for the purpose, and those who come to give consolation and show their sympathy go beyond the real mourners and join the hundred-voiced chorus. It was customary among the ancient Egyptians, [171] and also among the Jews, to indulge in these loud lamentations, to smear themselves with filth, and to hire mourning-women. The Prophet strictly forbade it, but the Egyptian women will not let themselves be deprived of these ancestral methods of expressing their grief.

764 Scarcely have the eyes of the beloved dead been closed and his head turned towards Meccah, when preparations are begun for getting the corpse out of the house. The ancient Egyptians, on the other hand, retained the body at least seventy days in the house for the purpose of embalming it, before it was placed in the tomb. All the former repose and dignity of the Oriental are now gone; beside the dead body are found only loud despair and headlong haste. The doctor [693] or corpse-inspector is first sent for before waiting for the first traces of the phenomena of death, and he must give permission for the burial of the body while it is yet warm. Other messengers have already purchased the linen for the shroud, while outside, the grave-digger is already preparing the last

9: Klunzinger D-5 (1863-1875) 1878
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abode. The corpse-washer goes to work with the utmost care; he washes the body up and down, repeatedly cleaning out all external openings, including the nose and ears, and stops them with cotton; cotton is placed even between the toes and fingers and under the armpits. After the body is dried with equal care it is enveloped in the linen cloth, which has meantime been sewed together, and in such a way that no part of the dead is now visible. It is then laid on a bier without a coffin (it is only the Christians that hastily put a coffin together), and a green or red pall is spread over it. After a benediction has been said over it in the mosque, it is carried to the graveyard.

Hither the dead are borne at a rapid pace, those at least that were Mohammedans. With a haste and hurry that nothing can check the funeral procession rolls along, amid the murmur of *la ilah ill allah*, in order to carry the bier from the city of the living to the city of the dead. The advanced guard is formed by some blind and poor people and petty scribes, perhaps also some boys as a kind of choristers, and some flag-bearers. The bier is borne by four men, friends of the deceased, who are relieved by others of his friends, and thus the rapid march does not meet with the slightest interruption. A long procession of mourners and sympathizers follows, all in their ordinary working-day blouses, the relatives in the oldest and filthiest possible. Several portly well-to-do gentlemen pant behind, or have got themselves mounted upon trotting asses. By the side or at the end of the procession follows the wailing chorus of women, who on this day show remarkably little of their usual strictness in veiling themselves.

Having reached its destination, the corpse, wrapped only in its white shroud, is taken from the bier and let down without a coffin into a perpendicular excavation. During this proceeding, if the corpse is that of a female her former street mantle is held spread out over her in order to keep off longing glances—under such circumstances little to be expected. It is not the perpendicular excavation, however, that receives the dead body, which, being protected by no

9: Klunzinger D-5 (1863-1875) 1878
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764 coffin, would be crushed by the clods of earth heaped over it. This excavation serves only as the entrance to a roomy earthen vault, hollowed out alongside of it, in which the body is placed, and is thus protected as well as if in a coffin. The entrance to the lateral vault is then built up with bricks, and during this lengthy operation the people standing around sing the melodious song "God pardon the Mohammedan men [533] and Mohammedan women, the believing men and believing women" (*allahu mughfir el moslimin u el moslimat u el mumenin u el mumenat*). One of the scribes, an imam, a 775 schoolmaster, or the corpse-washer, delivers himself of a short 764 stereotyped funeral discourse, in which the deceased—who is no doubt straining his ears to listen—is instructed as to what he is to answer at the examination he will have to undergo in the coming night. Once more the confession of the Mohammedan faith is impressed upon him. For there come to test him two angels of horrid aspect, Nakir and Munkir by [776] name, and torment him soul and body if he does not stand on the firm basis of Islam. Lastly, those present whisper 764 the *fatha*, and amid loud invocations to the gracious and all-merciful One, clod after clod is flung by them into the grave. The male members of the family who act as mourners place themselves in a row, receive the consolatory words and handshaking of the people who have come along with them, and every one hastens to the place whence he has come.

765 In the night we hear behind the walls of the house of mourning the shrieking of women, now wound off in the trochees of a machine in action, anon in the dactyls of the steam-horse thundering along at full speed, or breaking up into the indefinite clack of a mill. Briskly is the kettle-drum beaten, and high up, from time to time, like a rocket, rises a shriek from a hundred throats. The earth gives out a hollow sound from the stamping of the feet of the filth-besmeared women. It sounds like an ungovernable outburst [535] of joy and revelry; it is the corpse dance, through which the [154] wife gives vent to her stormy grief.

The men, however, pass the "night of loneliness" with their friends and neighbours before the house or in a neigh-